

“AS FAR AS RESOUN AXETH”:  
CHAUCER’S CHALLENGE TO THE GRISELDA TRADITION

Alison Langdon

For at least six centuries, the story of Patient Griselda has fascinated, inspired, and repulsed readers, often simultaneously. This is a story that poses a sufficient challenge to move three of the greatest literary figures of the fourteenth century—Boccaccio, Petrarch, and Chaucer—to try their hands at its telling. In the process, each poet brings to the story his own imprint and his own moral lesson. While Boccaccio’s version is a masterpiece of ironic sociopolitical commentary, Petrarch’s redaction transforms the tale into a humanist, allegorical exemplum of constancy. In the Clerk’s Tale, Chaucer brings Petrarch’s tale and an anonymous French translation into conflicting dialogue with one another, superimposing the French marital exemplum onto Petrarch’s spiritual allegory. In doing so, I argue, Chaucer reveals a dissonance that emanates from the nature and ethical validity of Griselda’s vow that she will obey Walter’s will in all things as if it were her own. This dissonance subtly but significantly challenges the exemplary force of the Griselda tradition, showing that constancy untempered by moral reasoning is a problematic virtue at best.

Many scholars find in the Clerk’s Tale a celebration of patience and constancy in the same line as Petrarch’s *Historia*. Readings of the tale such as those offered by Wimsatt, Levy, and Lawrence Besserman emphasize its analogies between Griselda and Christ, Mary, or Job. Exemplary readings see it as an expression of ideal human constancy leading to spiritual transcendence, Griselda’s patient suffering an emblem of obedience to God in His inscrutable Providence: “If Griselda showed such patience to the will of a flawed earthly husband, then what patient submission ought the faithful Christian show to the will of a loving and omnipotent God?” (Edden 370). Today’s readers find it difficult to accept the example Griselda offers because, too conditioned by modern realism, we do not see beyond the literal text and perceive its transcendent meaning, or value such extreme patience as a virtue. Reluctance to accept the Griselda story as an exemplum is symptomatic of “presentism”—we project our own culturally-conditioned “resistance to patience” onto the medieval past (Morse 52). Other critics see Griselda’s adherence to her vow as a positive

expression of the medieval insistence upon the correspondence of word and deed, finding any critique of this faithfulness unthinkable: “Griselda is presented as supremely good [by virtue of her patience and constancy], by signs which medieval readers could not take except as signs of goodness” (Sledd 78). Much like Petrarch’s Veronese friend, who fails to be moved by the story because he cannot imagine any real woman with such patience as Griselda’s, we fail to recognize the tale’s stark alterity and approach it on its own terms.

Yet those terms can be troubling. As Robert E. Finnegan explains, “We are asked to recognize in Griselda’s forbearance a positive exemplum of the Christian’s relationship to God; yet Griselda, deliberately fashioning herself an extension of her husband’s will and thus exercising the patience that Morse finds a mark of her ‘exemplary’ status, makes of herself an accomplice to homicide” (303). The difficulties of reconciling realistic and allegorical or exemplary modes of meaning in the Clerk’s Tale become the focus of several important studies—most famously that of Salter, who finds these difficulties evidence of the Clerk’s own ambivalence toward the tale he tells, and including Ginsberg’s analysis of the Clerk’s incomplete understanding of his Petrarchan source. Nevertheless, for many readers the realistic details of the Clerk’s Tale prevent acceptance of any parallel between Griselda’s situation and that of the patient Christian; such readers conclude that despite its religious symbolism the Clerk’s Tale is in fact a wholly secular story because it offers no providential pattern, and that Griselda’s “preoccupations are characteristically human and this-worldly” (Edden 371). Saul Nathaniel Brody is more explicit:

Not only is Griselda’s life not punctuated by divine miracles; in each test, the narrator’s asides and the actions of Walter and Griselda leave us to ponder how unlike God the husband is, how unlike a saint the wife is, how marriage is not a proper allegory for the relationships between man and God. . . . [The Clerk’s] story echoes other saintly narratives, but at the same time it undercuts their aesthetic and moral principles by making Griselda’s flawed humanity inescapable. (117)

I find that Chaucer’s version challenges our understanding of the Griselda story as a moral or ethical tale in ways that parallel Boccaccio. Although the Clerk’s Tale demonstrates no verbal echoes of *Decameron* 10.10 that establish Boccaccio’s text as a source with

certainly, we may still identify a source relationship between the two tales, in that they bear “certain striking resemblances . . . [and] closer parallels in plot or character” (Farrell 351, 352). In addition, Chaucer’s version is more ideologically similar to Boccaccio’s than to Petrarch’s; though Petrarch admires the “resolution to affirm one’s choice in full recognition [of] changed conditions” (Ginsberg, *Chaucer’s Italian Tradition* 256), it is the problematic nature of such constancy that troubles Chaucer. As with the Boccaccio version, in the Clerk’s Tale we are left with no unequivocal direction as to how we should read Griselda and her story; here, though, allegory’s dependence upon the letter of the text is foregrounded, and the reader leaves the story troubled by the socially destructive potential embodied in the allegorical reading of Griselda. Chaucer’s tale exploits the pathos of the Griselda story, not to encourage one to follow Griselda’s example, but to explore the limits of constancy itself as a virtue.

In 1373, Boccaccio’s friend and mentor, Francis Petrarch, wrote to Boccaccio telling him that a copy of the *Decameron* had come into his hands. Most of the work he damns with faint praise, as the pleasant, lighted-hearted and frivolous scribblings of a young man, but the story of Griselda impressed him so greatly that he decided to translate the story into Latin, the universal tongue, so that others unfamiliar with Italian might read it as well (655; *Letters* 17.3). Petrarch is quick to stress that the story remains essentially Boccaccio’s while putting his own imprint on the tale, suggesting that his translation is what the story really means, what Boccaccio would have written as an older, wiser man: he will stabilize the tale’s volatile meaning, rather than leaving it open to the reader’s interpretation (656; *Letters* 17.3).

Petrarch concludes his translation of *Decameron* 10.10 with the following moral explication of Griselda’s story:

I decided to retell this story in another style not so much to encourage the married women of our day to imitate this wife’s patience, which to me seems hardly imitable, as to encourage the readers to imitate at least this woman’s constancy, so that what she maintained toward her husband they may maintain toward our God. . . . I would number among the men overflowing with constancy whoever would suffer without a murmur for his God what this little peasant woman suffered for her mortal husband. (668; *Letters* 17.3)

From an ironic tale firmly situated in the real, material world, Petrarch draws a moral lesson applicable to the human soul in the spiritual realm. He effects this in part by accepting as literal truth certain ambiguous or ironic details in *Decameron* 10.10 and then reading beyond the letter to discover transcendent truth. He also expands Dioneo's tangential observation that "celestial spirits may sometimes descend even into the houses of the poor" (795; 10.10) and uses this as the basis for his allegorical representation of Griselda. In other words, he attempts to extract from Boccaccio's story the aspects he finds pleasurable and instructive and to stabilize its more problematic ones. Not only, then, does Petrarch take the Dioneo out of the tale—in rhetorical terms, he converts Dioneo's irony into pure allegory.

Many critics take it for granted that Chaucer embraces Petrarch's moral. The assumption seems to be that if, "in his adaptation of Boccaccio's story, [Petrarch] had been concerned to identify Griselda as an emblem of human constancy in the face of divine testing, then Chaucer's attitude must be comparable—or, in any case, quite unlike Boccaccio's" (Pelen 2). Thus Thompson argues that Chaucer also attempts to work on his audience's affective faculties so as to give the story enough force to shock the jaded soul into recognition and, ideally, imitation: "[It is] only by eliciting such an *affective* response that Chaucer can succeed in making the allegory *effective*, otherwise it simply falls into the category of another medieval tale of the soul's duty to God over which any audience, medieval or not, is simply going to nod" (305). Certainly this assessment would seem to hold true for Petrarch's aim in writing his version, which greatly amplifies the pathos of Boccaccio's original. In one of his letters, Petrarch explains preference for *exempla* as a means to inspire virtuous behavior:

There is nothing that moves me as much as the examples of outstanding men. They help one to rise on high and to test the mind to see whether it possesses anything solid, anything noble, anything unbending and firm against fortune, or whether it lies to itself about itself. Next to experience itself which is the best teacher of things, I would wager that there is no better way to learn than by having the mind desire to emulate these greats as closely as possible. (316; *Familiari* 6.4)

Unlike those who hold theology to be primarily an intellectual science concerned with speculative or practical questions, Petrarch shows his affinity with those such as Bonaventure who believe that the affective force of Scripture is of the highest importance. Bonaventure explains that “our affections are moved more strongly by example than by arguments, by promises rather than by logical reasonings, by devotions rather than definitions. . . . Thus, if a man is not moved to heed precepts and prohibitions, he may at least be moved by the examples narrated . . . (235-36). For Petrarch, too, *exempla* carry more force than appeals to the intellect.

The danger of affective appeals, however, is that of losing control over the effects, and Petrarch himself was not able to control fully the effect his tale had on its readers, as he explains in a later letter to Boccaccio. Petrarch recounts how one Veronese reader is moved not at all by the story, for he is convinced the story is entirely fictitious; if it were true, he says, no woman in the world could match Griselda’s patience and constancy. Another reader, a Paduan, is so overcome with compassion that he cannot read through his tears and must pass the story to another to finish, but it is Walter’s cruelty that inspires the Paduan’s tears, not admiration for Griselda’s virtuous triumph (669-70; *Letters* 17.4). Neither reader responds properly to the moral of Petrarch’s Griselda, for both are completely caught up in the particulars of her circumstances rather than the universalized allegory, making her example problematic as a model of constancy.

It is just such a problem that Chaucer takes up in the Clerk’s Tale. In spite of his reiteration of Petrarch’s moral, the Clerk himself finds it difficult to embrace the example he dutifully lauds, as evidenced by his repeated eruptions in compassionate indignation against Walter’s treatment of Griselda. A. C. Spearing observes that the Clerk “cannot bring himself to sympathize with the motive force of the whole story, the part played by Walter in causing Grisilde’s sufferings; and his disapproving attitude towards Walter emerges in the form of a largely personal commentary on Petrarch’s story” (90). The Clerk’s response shows more affinity with Boccaccio’s narrator, Dioneo, who concludes that “it would have served [Gualtieri] right if he had chanced upon a wife, who, being driven from the house in her shift, had found some other man to shake her skin-coat for her, earning herself a fine new dress in the process” (795;10.10). Dioneo’s parting commentary “opens a breach in the moral statement of the story and, as he alludes to a different turn that the story might have taken, he unmakes the story he

has just told" (Mazzotta 128). In his frame narrative Boccaccio does nothing to help unravel Dioneo's moral knot. He explains that he undertakes this project for the solace of ladies suffering in love, who "will learn to recognize what should be avoided and likewise what should be pursued, and these things can only lead, in my opinion, to the removal of their affliction" (3). The narrator himself seems no longer tormented by intemperate desire, so we might infer that he hopes to offer his projected audience a similar cure through temperance. However, in both the prologue and the epilogue, Boccaccio gives his book the alternative title "Prince Galhalt," evoking the concept of book-as-pander as immortalized in *Inferno* 5 with Paolo and Francesca's notoriously intemperate desire. His conclusion to the *Decameron* further asserts that the drawing of any moral is the sole responsibility of the reader:

If anyone should want to extract evil counsel from these tales, or fashion an evil design, there is nothing to prevent him, provided he twists and distorts them sufficiently to find the thing he is seeking. And if anyone should study them for the usefulness and profit they may bring him, he will not be disappointed. (800)

Logic can persuade us either way; thus the will of the reader must be good so as to ensure that logic is informed by virtue, but Boccaccio leaves us with no guidance in our attempts to discover the moral import of any of his tales, least of all that of Griselda.

Chaucer opens a similar moral breach in his own version for the story, for here the realistic details of the Clerk's Tale militate so strongly against acceptance of any parallel between Griselda's situation and that of the patient Christian as to render its exemplary force inoperable. Chaucer effects this in part by interpolating elements of another translation of Petrarch's *Historia*, the anonymous *Le Livre Griseldis*, which contravenes Petrarch's exhortation to read the story for its moral of spiritual constancy by regrounding it in the real world of husbands and wives and putting the story to use as a marital exemplum demonstrating proper conduct for wives. In his conclusion to the tale, for example, the *Griseldis* author makes a subtle, but significant, change from Petrarch's Latin. Whereas Petrarch tells his tale "*not so much* that women of our time should imitate the patience of this wife" ("Hanc historiam stilo nunc alio retexere visum fuit, *non tam*

*ideo*, ut matronas nostri temporis ad imitandam huius uxoris pacienciam” [Letters 668; 17.3. Emphasis added]), the Griseldis author changes Petrarch’s “not so much” to “not only”: “Ceste hystoire est recité de la pacience de celle femme, *non pas tant seulement* ques les femmes qui sont aujourd’uy je esmeuve a ensuir ycelle pacience et constance . . .” (289. Emphasis added). This change insists upon Griselda’s female identity as integral to the story where Petrarch would efface it.

Similarly, in the Clerk’s Tale Walter is not testing Griselda’s patience, obedience, or constancy as abstract, universal qualities; rather, he tests her very femaleness, her adherence to the ideals of womanhood, as he explains at the tale’s end: “I have doon this deede / For no malice, ne for no crueltee, / But for t’assaye in thee thy wommanheede” (CIT 1073-75). Moreover, as Elaine Tuttle Hansen points out (199), the Clerk’s version of the story repeatedly calls our attention to the marital context of the testing of Griselda’s vow throughout the tale: “This markys in his herte longeth so / To tempte his wyf” (CIT 451-52); “But as for me, I seye that yvele it sit / To assaye a wyf whan that it is no need, / And putten hire in angwyssh and in drede” (CIT 460-62); “What koude a sturdy housbonde moore devyse / To preeve hir wyfhod and hir stedefastnesse, / And he continuyng evere in sturdinesse?” (CIT 698-700). It is difficult to remember that we are to think of Griselda as a sort of Everyman when her womanhood is so foregrounded, despite the Clerk’s reiteration of Petrarch’s universalizing moral at the end of his tale. In drawing upon both these sources for the Griselda story, Chaucer’s translation places spiritual allegory and realistic exemplum in cacophonic dialogue, rediscovering the human consequences that Petrarch attempts to transcend while still apparently insisting on the story’s allegorical import.

Chaucer’s characterization of Griselda also complicates a purely allegorical reading of her story. As in Petrarch’s version, she makes an implicit comparison between her trials and Job’s—“Naked out of my fadres house,’ quod she, / ‘I cam, and naked moot I turn agayn”” (CIT 871-72)—but she both prefaces and follows this comparison with details of her suffering. She makes three pointed references to her loss of maidenhead in lines 837, 866, and 883, emphasizing both the faith that she brought into the marriage and the extent of its betrayal. In the midst of this passage Griselda comes as close as she ever will without breaking her vow to expressing the agony she feels over Walter’s

actions: “O goode God! How gentil and how kynde / Ye semed by youre speche and youre visage / The day that maketh was oure mariage!” (CIT 852-54). Her speech recalls the human ramifications of Walter’s testing of her.

One of the most significant alterations in Chaucer’s version is Griselda’s response when she learns her children are standing before her, alive and well. In the Boccaccio and Petrarch versions, her immediate response is one of joy, but the Clerk describes a swoon of pent-up grief so deep that the bystanders can only pull the children from her unconscious embrace “with greet sleighte and greet difficultee” (CIT 1102). Severs argues that emphasizing the sergeant’s and Walter’s cruelty highlights Griselda’s meekness (233), but they also increase the pathos of the story, heightening the reader’s—and the Clerk’s—indignation at Walter’s treatment of her. The real human elements—Walter’s capriciousness, Griselda’s deeply buried grief—crowd the allegory to the point of incoherence.

Chaucer’s translation increases the pathos of the story but also makes it more difficult to accept the constancy that Petrarch lauds. He does not permit us to overlook the potentially damaging effects that constancy might have. Patient, virtuous, and submissive as a wife at the same time as she is imprudent, misguided, and neglectful of her duties as a mother, Griselda presents a disturbing and problematic model. Citing Clarissa Atkinson’s study of Christian motherhood, Barbara Newman argues that by medieval Christian criteria “the mother who abandoned a child or acquiesced in its death could still be considered a good mother as long as she did so for noble motives and with genuine though well-repressed grief” (52). Griselda’s grief is certainly well-repressed—perhaps too well. The Clerk’s response to Griselda’s steadfastness echoes the French author’s comment that a nurse would find it hard to give up her charge the way Griselda does her own child, and, characteristically, the Clerk highlights the contrast, exclaiming, “Wel myghte a mooder thanne han cryd ‘allas!’” (CIT 563). He wonders at Griselda’s self-control, but also seems to ask what kind of mother would allow her children to be murdered without protest.

The nobility of Griselda’s motives is questionable as well. Griselda as much as admits that she is sacrificing her children for her own benefit, to preserve the integrity of her promise. As she kisses her infant daughter in a final farewell, she bids God accept the child’s soul: “For this nyght shaltow dyen for my sake” (CIT 560). Pointing out that



“sake” meant not only “on behalf of” but could mean “guilt” or “sin” as well, Victor Yelverton Haines argues that we should read “sake” in line 560 as a pun that implicates Griselda’s complicity in her child’s murder: “[T]his very ‘sake’ as benefit [that Griselda is able to remain constant in her vow to Walter] is the same ‘sake’ as guilt in accepting the benefit of her child’s death for her sake” (95-96). Griselda’s statement encapsulates the morally ambivalent nature of her constancy, acknowledging that her constancy necessitates complicity in murder.

It is difficult not to get caught up in the real-world ramifications of Griselda’s passive submission. The Clerk is fully aware of this, and hurries to ensure that his audience does not make the mistake of literal interpretation, insisting that “This storie is seyed nat for that wyves sholde / Folwen Grisilde as in humylitee, / For it were inportable, though they wolde” (CIT 1142-44). The Clerk attempts to ensure an allegorical interpretation of Griselda’s constancy, repeating Petrarch’s dictum that “sith a womman was so pacient / Unto a mortal man, wel moore us oghte / Receyven al in gree that God us sent” (CIT 1149-51). However, as Kirkpatrick notes, “[W]hile the Clerk is allowed to recommend the lesson of constancy and humility ‘to every wight in his degree’ (1145), it is significant that before he proceeds to suggest any analogy between wife and soul and husband and God, he enters a concluding acknowledgement to Petrarch. . . . The responsibility for the analogy seems to be transferred firmly to Petrarch” (235).

Why should the Clerk wish to absolve himself of this responsibility? Although Petrarch asserts the essential, transcendent truth of Griselda’s constancy, Chaucer questions the ethical validity of the vow that secures that constancy to begin with, especially in light of the consequences that follow. Can we really praise such constancy when it supports something reprehensible and immoral?

For many medieval theologians, the answer is a resounding “No.” Thomas Aquinas explains that a promise is a conjunction of reason and will, expressed through language. While Aquinas distinguishes between promises and vows (vows as promises made to God may be made through inward expression alone), the criteria for promises and vows are essentially the same. In his *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas explains that “[c]ertain things are good, whatever be their result; such are acts of virtue, and these can be, absolutely speaking, the matter of a vow: some are evil, whatever their result may be; as those things which are sins in themselves, and these can nowise be the matter of a vow: while some, considered in themselves, are good, yet they may have an evil result, in

which case the vow must not be kept” (*Summa* 2.2 88.2). Aquinas illustrates this last point by referring to the story of Jephthe, who promised to sacrifice the first creature that came to meet him if the Lord would grant him victory over the Ammonites. Certainly the subject of this vow was a good one, a grateful offering of thanks; however, its outcome was evil in that first to greet Jephthe was his daughter, and it is unlawful to offer a human being as sacrifice. Jephthe erred in two ways: his promise lacked discretion, for he did not qualify his promise by limiting it to those creatures that would make a lawful sacrifice, and because he sacrificed his daughter, his keeping of that promise was wicked. Thus unexpected circumstances may release one from obligation to a vow or an oath if it “leads to an evil result through some new and unforeseen emergency,” for “[a]n oath must not be kept when it involves sin or a hindrance to good” (*Summa* 2.2 89.7). If one is not bound by a promise with illicit consequences even when that promise is made to God, the same would surely hold true of a promise between two human beings.

Chaucer seems agree with Aquinas on these issues. In the Tale of Melibee, Prudence’s advice to her husband echoes Aquinas:

Thou mayst also chaunge thy conseil if so be that thou fynde  
that by errour, or by oother cause, harm or damage may  
bityde. / Also if thy conseil be dishonest, or ellis cometh of  
dishonest cause, chaunge thy conseil. / For the lawes seyn that  
‘alle bihestes that been dishonest been of no value’; / and eek  
if so be that it be impossible, or may nat goodly be parfourned  
or kept.” (ParsT1226-29)

In the concluding story of *The Canterbury Tales*, the Parson reiterates the three conditions of a legitimate oath:

And if it be so that the lawe compelle you to swere, thanne  
rule yow after the lawe of God in youre sweryng, as seith  
Jermey, quarto capitulo: Thou shalt kepe three condicions:  
thou shalt swere “in trouthe, in doom, and in rightwisnesse.”  
This is to seyn, thou shalt swere sooth, for every lesynge is  
agayns Christ . . . Thou shalt sweren eke in doom, what thou  
art constreyned by thy domesman to witnessen the trouthe.  
Eek thow shalt nat swere for envye, ne for favour, ne for  
meede, but for rightwisnesse, for declaracioun of it, to the

worshipe of God and helpyng of thyne evene-Cristene. (ParsT  
591-94)

The Clerk's Tale makes it clear that Griselda should remain faithful to her vow "as far as resoun axeth" (CLT 25)—the wording of the Clerk's own oath to Harry Bailey. We do not achieve the good through blind adherence to absolute moral rules; in this fallen world, right reason informed by faith is necessary to discern proper action in accordance with the good. The Clerk's philosophical allegiances—specifically Aristotelian logic as received through Aquinas—prevent him from fully embracing Petrarch's own reading and the moral it expounds.

As one who "unto logyk hadde longe ygo" (GP 286), the Clerk would most certainly share Aristotle's conviction that reason is imperative for one to be truly virtuous. In his *Nichomachean Ethics*, Aristotle explains that real virtue does not develop without practical wisdom, which judges according to particular and peculiar instances rather than abstract universals (1141a; 6.7). Thus, while the affective power of poetry can stir the emotive and imaginative faculties of the reader to will the good, the will must be mediated by reason in order to determine the good; otherwise an action cannot be truly virtuous. This view is also supported by William of Ockham, who insists that reason is integral to virtue. In his early work, *On the Connections of the Virtues*, the will to act in accordance with "right reason" is the first and lowest of five stages, for it is not enough to will to act in accordance with right reason if one does so on the basis of extraneous, non-moral motives (169; art. 4.451, 169). Griselda wills the good in that she wills constancy, and constancy is indeed a virtue in the absolute sense—but only if enacted in conjunction with right reason, which determines whether the individual circumstances are appropriate. This seeming contradiction—an absolute value that is nevertheless contingent—is symptomatic of the fallen human state.

In the end, the Clerk seems to have delivered exactly what the Host asked for, albeit in his own way. Instead of offering a tale shrouded in abstract philosophy, the Clerk has retold Petrarch's allegorized story of Griselda in such a way as to bring it firmly down to earth. Just as the final tale of the *Decameron* prompts the brigata to return from their escapist idyll in the countryside to plague-ridden Florence, the Clerk's Tale forces the Griselda story back into the real world, in which contingent circumstances may require one to take a broader view of virtues of constancy. At first blush, the Clerk and Dioneo could not

*Langdon*

seem more different; the one is devout and bookish, a scholar whose speech is decorous and “ful of hy sentence” (GP 306), the other is a sophisticated, mischievous cynic prone to tales of wit and ribaldry. However, the Clerk’s Envoy functions in much the same way as Dioneo’s ambivalent conclusion to *Decameron* 10.10, in that its apparent irony undercuts any moral lesson: are we to imitate Griselda, or not? The *trouthe* of the tale—its spiritual virtue—is as uncertain as the virtue of Griselda’s *trouthe* with Walter.

*Western Kentucky University*

*Langdon*

Note

I would like to express my gratitude to the members of Potter College Faculty Writing Group at Western Kentucky University and to the anonymous reviewer whose comments and suggestions helped streamline this paper.

<sup>1</sup> For a thorough, comparative discussion of Chaucer's use of Petrarch and the *Griseldis*, see J. Burke Severs, especially 215-28.

Langdon

Works Cited

- Alighieri, Dante. *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*. Vol. 1: *Inferno*. Ed. and trans. Robert M. Durling. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996. Print.
- Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. Roger Crisp. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000. Print.
- Besserman, Lawrence. "Biblical Exegesis, Typology, and the Imagination of Chaucer." *Typology and English Medieval Literature*. Ed. Hugh T. Keenan. New York: AMS, 1992. 183-205. Print.
- Boccaccio, Giovanni. *The Decameron*. Trans. G. H. McWilliam. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Penguin, 1972. Print.
- Bonaventure. *Breviloquium*: Prologue, Section 5. *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism c. 1100-1375: The Commentary Tradition*. Ed. and trans. A. J. Minnis, A. B. Scott, and David Wallace. Rev. ed. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000: 235-36. Print.
- Brody, Saul Nathaniel. "Chaucer's Rhyme Royal Tales and the Secularization of the Saint." *Chaucer Review* 20.2 (1985): 113-31. Print.
- Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Riverside Chaucer*. Ed. Larry Benson. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Boston: Houghton, 1987. Print.
- Correale, Robert M., and Mary Hamel, eds. *Sources and Analogues of the Canterbury Tales*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002. Print.
- Edden, Valerie. "Sacred and Secular in the Clerk's Tale." *Chaucer Review* 26.4 (1992): 369-76.
- Farrell, Thomas J. "Source or Hard Analogue? *Decameron* X, 10 and the *Clerk's Tale*." *Chaucer Review* 37.4 (2003): 346-64. Print.

Finnegan, Robert E. "'She Should Have Said No to Walter': Griselda's Promise in the Clerk's Tale." *English Studies* 4 (1994): 303-21. Print.

Ginsberg, Warren. "'And Speketh So Pleyn': The Clerk's Tale and its Teller." *Criticism* 20 (1978): 307-23. Print.

—. *Chaucer's Italian Tradition*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2002. Print.

Haines, Victor Yelverton. "Chaucer's Clerk, on the Level?" In *Chaucer and Language: Essays in Honour of Douglas Wurtele*. Ed. Robert Myles and David Williams. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2001. 83-106. Print.

Hansen, Elaine Tuttle. *Chaucer and the Fictions of Gender*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1992. Print.

Kirkpatrick, Robin. "The Griselda Story in Boccaccio, Petrarch and Chaucer." *Chaucer and the Italian Trecento*. Ed. Piero Boitani. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983. 231-48. Print.

Levy, Bernard. "The Meanings of 'The Clerk's Tale.'" *Chaucer and the Craft of Fiction*. Ed. Leigh A. Arrathoon. Rochester, Mich.: Solaris, 1986. 385-409. Print.

*Le Livre Griseldis*. Severs 255-89. Print.

Mazzotta, Guiseppe. *The World at Play in Boccaccio's Decameron*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1986. Print.

Morse, Charlotte C. "The Exemplary Griselda." *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 7 (1985): 51-86. Print.

Newman, Barbara. *From Virile Woman to Womanchrist*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1995. Print.

- Pelen, Marc. "Irony in Boccaccio's *Decameron* and in Chaucer's 'Clerk's Tale.': Critical Viewpoints on Chaucer's Immediate Models in the 'Clerk's Tale.'" *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 27.1 (1991): 1-22. Print.
- Petrarch, Francis. *Letters of Old Age*. Vol. 2. Trans. Aldo S. Bernardo, Saul Leven, and Reta A. Bernardo. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1992. Print.
- . *Familiari* 6.4. *Rerum familiarum libri* I-VIII. Trans. Aldo S. Bernardo. Albany, N.Y.: SUNY P, 1975. 314-17. Print.
- Salter, Elizabeth. *Chaucer: The Knight's Tale and the Clerk's Tale*. London: Arnold, 1962. Print.
- Severs, J. Burke. *The Literary Relationships of Chaucer's Clerkes Tale*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1942. Print.
- Sledd, James. "The Clerk's Tale: The Monsters and the Critics." *Modern Philology* 51 (1953): 73-82. Print.
- Spade, Paul Vincent. "William of Ockham." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Metaphysics Research Lab, 16 August 2002. Web. 12 October 2012.
- Spearing, A. C. *Criticism and Medieval Poetry*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1972. Print.
- Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*. 5 vols. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province. 1920. Print.
- Thompson, N. S. *Chaucer, Boccaccio, and the Debate of Love: A Comparative Study of The Decameron and The Canterbury Tales*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996.
- Wimsatt, James I. "The Blessed Virgin and the Two Coronations of Griselda." *Mediaevalia* 6 (1980): 187-207. Print.
- Wood, Rega. *Ockham on the Virtues*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue UP, 1997. Print.